

SAD EPISODE ENDING

Syrian Campaign

OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.

HAIFA, July 10.—The news that General Dentz is suing for an armistice has been well received by the Australians, the general feeling being one of relief that the end of a painful episode is in sight.

Probably no campaign in history has been fought with more determination and less animosity. There has been not the least bitterness between the British and the French troops they have been fighting—they only regret that such a distasteful job had to be done.

The Australians' main feeling towards the French is one of admiration for soldiers who fought well when they had no stomach for the fight.

The contrast between the Syrian campaign and the campaigns in Libya and Greece, where the Australians had a really "hot" fight, is most marked. This is not to say that the fighting has not been hard and bloody. The battles of the Litani River, Merdjayoun, Damour, and also 100 unrecorded actions in the hill country, were grim, desperate affairs.

Whatever the merits of their cause, the Vichy soldiers in the field won the admiration and respect of their opponents.

NO BELLS TO RING

Bells will not ring for this melancholy victory over our ex-Ally, but every Allied soldier at least is soberly thankful that he can now turn his energies to the main task—the defeating of Germany.

The end of the four-days' battle for Damour came when a Victorian pioneer battalion went in at bayonet point and cleared the French from the dense banana and orange plantations, where they had made their last stand.

There was brief hand-to-hand fighting in which the Victorians inflicted heavy casualties, but suddenly the French resistance broke. A few succeeded in escaping through our lines, but the majority were taken prisoner. Booty in material included machine-guns, trench mortars, field guns, tanks, armoured cars, and other vehicles.

Beirut was clearly visible from Damour, and the great pall of smoke overhanging the outskirts of the town bore out the R.A.F.'s claim that it had started fires among the oil tanks. This destruction is a very serious matter for the French, who are very short of oil.

A small force of Australian infantry was having a difficult time against a superior force entrenched on the crest of a steep ridge north of Jezzin to-day when British Mounted Yeomanry saw

of a steep ridge north of Jezzin to-day when British Mounted Yeomanry saw their plight. The men dismounted, and then, side by side, the Australians and English Yeomanry made a bayonet charge up the hill.

They rushed the crest and drove the French in disorder down the other side.

An Australian military policeman had a lucky escape yesterday when accidentally he rode on a motor cycle into the French lines in Damour. Miraculously he escaped the hail of bullets, though he was thrown off his cycle. Gendarmes took him into the police station and gave him a meal and a bed. This morning he rejoined his unit.